

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
Office of the Executive Director
Interagency Advisory Group
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415

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Minutes of the IAG Committee on
STAFFING

June 30, 1977

The meeting was conducted by John W. Fossum, Chairman of the IAG Staffing Committee. The meeting was called to discuss two topics:

- (1) Shifting resources in the recruiting and examining program in Fiscal Year 1978 to meet critical program needs, and
- (2) Delegating certain examining responsibilities to agencies.

While these two topics are related, they were discussed separately, and agencies were asked to comment separately on each one. Comments on the cost-saving proposals are due on July 6, 1977, and may be submitted in writing to the Bureau of Recruiting and Examining (BRE) at the Civil Service Commission or telephoned to Don Holum, Chief of the Office of Examination Plans, on 632-6251. Input regarding the delegation of examining functions has been requested by July 15, 1977, in a memorandum from Raymond Jacobson, Executive Director of the Civil Service Commission, to the Executive Officers' Group. Comments may also be telephoned on this proposal to Don Holum or Al Squerrini at the above number.

Brief Announcement

Mr. Fossum indicated that the dates of the Staffing Committee conference would be changed, probably to September 27-29, 1977. Further details will be forthcoming.

Shifting Resources in the Recruiting and Examining Program in FY 1978

Mr. Fossum stated that the Civil Service Commission's resources for recruiting and examining activities were being severely taxed because of numerous and varied program responsibilities which must be met. There has been no funding relief from the Office of Management and Budget, and the new Civil Service Commissioners have asked BRE to make a presentation

with proposed recommendations for cutting resources at an open Commission meeting on July 12, 1977. The following six proposals have been developed by BRE in response to this request:

1. Limit PACE to one filing and testing period.
2. Eliminate the Federal Automated Career System (FACS).
3. Begin delegating to agencies examining responsibility for selected single-agency occupations.
4. Delegate to agencies temporary appointing authority for wage grade positions.
5. Decentralize to agencies Senior Level recruiting and application processing responsibility.
6. Modify the Summer Employment Examination and decentralize certification activity to agencies.

Mr. Fossum elaborated on each proposal, and agency representatives at the meeting were asked for their reactions.

Proposal 1. Limit PACE to one filing period with testing conducted over a 6- to 8-week period.

One of the main criticisms of the PACE is that we test too many people for a small number of jobs. In order to reduce excessive competition in this examination, BRE is proposing to allow applicants to file only during the month of November to take the test in January and February. Adoption of this proposal would undoubtedly have an adverse effect on college recruiting programs.

To reduce the negative impact of one filing period on college relations an alternative proposal is to give the test twice: in January and April. Applicants who filed early during a 4-month filing period (November to March) would be tested in January, and the remainder in April. Adoption of this alternative would not be expected to reduce competition significantly.

Discussion: Agencies generally agreed that limiting PACE to one filing period would hamper college recruiting and affirmative action efforts, and favored two testing periods over one. Arch Ramsay, Director of BRE, stated that the EEO-Merit System Interface Task Force has been looking into alternatives to the PACE, and is expected to work up a paper on the subject within the next few weeks.

Claudia Cooley, Chief of the Program Management and Evaluation Division, BRE, indicated that substantial cost savings were likely with the November-only filing period, but that savings would probably be minimal with the alternative option. Don Holum revealed that approximately 250,000 PACE applicants are tested each year with about a 51 percent pass rate.

In response to a question about what would be done if there were insufficient eligibles available for hard-to-fill jobs, Hugh Wallace, Director of the Program Development Division, BRE, assured agency representatives that the Commission would provide for additional testing under either of the above alternatives if a special need developed.

Proposal 2. Eliminate the Federal Automated Career System (FACS).

FACS was introduced in 1973 to serve as a resource for Federal managers who needed experienced employees, and to provide for increased mobility and career appointments for Federal employees.

Although considerable Commission resources have been invested in FACS, agencies have made limited use of the system. The principal agency complaint has been the inability of the system to provide current information on registrants, and additional resources would be needed to update information more frequently. Therefore, we propose to dissolve the FACS operation.

Discussion: There was a general agreement from agency representatives that FACS had not been very effective. It was pointed out, however, that the system had been useful to small agencies, particularly for hard-to-fill positions.

Mr. Ramsay asked the Staffing Committee participants from agencies whose Directors of Personnel were members of the Federal Personnel Board to obtain their input.

Proposal 3. Delegate to agencies the application processing, register maintenance, and certification processes for those occupations limited to a single agency.

Under this proposal, the Commission would begin delegating to agencies the application processing, register maintenance, and certification workloads for occupations unique to a single agency or for which the agency is the primary user. Examples of the kinds of occupations which fall into this category are Air Traffic Controller, Border Patrol Agent, Deputy U. S. Marshal, Treasury Enforcement Agent, and IRS Seasonal Taxpayer Service Representative. The Commission would continue to conduct and score written tests, as well as monitor agency activities. Technical support would also be provided.

Discussion: The primary subject of discussion on this proposal was the additional resources which agencies might need to take over the above activities. Mr. Ramsay indicated that the Commission is unable to commit any resources to agencies at this time. He promised to bring agency concerns in this area to the attention of the Commissioners at the meeting on July 12. Several agencies appeared to be willing to take on the additional workload without CSC resources.

Proposal 4. Delegate authority to agencies to make outside-the-register temporary limited appointments to wage grade positions.

This proposal would provide across-the-board delegations to agencies with occupational expertise to evaluate candidates for wage grade positions for which there are frequent fluctuations in staffing needs.

Discussion: The only concern expressed about this proposal was the possible need to change the Commission's definition of positions to which temporary appointments can be made. The proposal was considered workable if temporary appointments were permitted to meet temporary staffing needs, in addition to getting temporary work accomplished.

Proposal 5. Revise the Senior Level Examination by decentralizing recruiting and application processing responsibility to agencies.

Under this proposal, the Senior Level register would be abolished, and competition for GS-13 through GS-15 positions would be limited to those candidates recruited by agencies. Agencies would submit recruiting plans to the CSC for approval. The Commission would continue to rank and certify Senior Level candidates. Since most positions are in the Washington, D. C., area, the proposal includes a provision for centralized certification in BRE. Merit system integrity is, of course, of major concern with this proposal, which would also include experimentation with allowing interested agencies to rank and certify candidates.

Discussion: Agency reactions to this proposal were favorable; however, it was suggested that the Commission let agencies do the ranking and certification if the proposal is adopted. There was some concern expressed about excessive recruiting demands for limited job opportunities. Mr. Fossum indicated that the Commission could continue to distribute the Senior Level Job Opportunities Bulletin or a similar recruitment vehicle.

Proposal 6. Modify the Summer Employment Examination

For the past several years the number of jobs filled through the Summer Employment Examination has declined steadily, with most of the jobs being clerical. In June 1976, the Commission asked BRE to develop an alternative

to the current examination in order to reduce rising costs of administering this exam. BRE developed a proposal which was distributed to agencies for comment in CSC Bulletin No. 332-43. Basically, the plan calls for all summer jobs, except those filled under Needy Youth and Federal Summer Intern Programs, to be filled through agency-administered staffing plans. The Commission would administer the clerical test to applicants for clerical positions, and numerical scores obtained on the written test would be used by agencies to rank candidates.

Discussion: Comments on this proposal have already been received in response to the Bulletin. Representatives of several agencies who were present at the meeting objected to the proposal. These included Agriculture, HEW, and VA. The Department of the Interior supported the proposal.

SUMMARY

Mr. Ramsay stated that agencies have expressed interest in the past in assuming responsibility for various parts of the examining program, and that the Commission was inviting them to submit suggestions regarding the specific areas for which they would be willing to accept this additional responsibility.

Delegating Some Examining Responsibilities to Agencies

Mr. Fossum informed the group that at the first public meeting of the new Commissioners last week the Commissioners approved a recommendation by the Merit System Review Task Force that the CSC experiment with delegation of examining responsibility to one or two agencies for occupations for which the agency is the sole or preponderant user. The Commissioners also authorized experimentation with delegation of examining authority for installations in isolated locations for types of positions typically filled from the local labor market. BRE has been asked to develop methodology for further experimentation for consideration by the Commissioners on July 19, 1977.

Copies of Mr. Jacobson's memorandum to the Executive Officers' Group outlining the proposal and requesting reports on occupations for which each agency wishes to assume responsibility were distributed. Agency reports have been requested by July 15, 1977.

In addition to the above proposals and those included in response to the Commission's cost-saving requirements, the following additional kinds of decentralization are being considered:

- Greater use of special examiners on a temporary basis to meet critical, short-term staffing needs.

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- Final ranking of a group of well-qualified applicants by agency subject matter experts.
- Register maintenance by agencies of eligibles previously assigned numerical scores by the Commission in score order for employment consideration.

SUMMARY

The Commission is seeking comments from agencies on ways in which they would like to participate in the experimentation within existing resources, as well as on the decentralization proposals outlined above. Any other suggestions regarding decentralization of examining functions are also welcomed.

ATTENDANCE

Fossum, John (Chairman) (CSC)	Keener, Kay (NASA)
Alexander, Conrad (VA)	Lane, Larry (Interior)
Boyles, Hal (Navy)	Lomaz, Bert (EIB)
Brendle, James (CPSC)	Love, Jane (Labor)
Brisendine, Ned (ERDA)	Lovell, Elmer (NLRB)
Cardinal, Ray (FPC)	Lynt, Betty (Labor)
Dann, Clayton (State)	Malone, Ann (FMC)
Dick, Donnie (GAO)	McCloskey, Tom (State)
Dietrich, Robert (ICC)	Moeller, Barbara (Smith. Inst.)
Douglass, Hobart (DOT)	Needham, Bruce (CFTC)
Edgmon, Lester (VA)	Probst, Lee (Justice)
Eggers, Al (FCC)	Rogers, Christine (Interior)
Elledge, Anne (HEW)	Ross, Wanda (FHLBB)
Foley, Lorraine (FCA)	Ryan, Tom (HUD)
Frost, LeBaron (FTC)	Simpson, Tyler (ACTION)
Fuhrman, Beatrice (AID)	Titus, Alice (GSA)
Harris, Boyd (USIA)	Toth, Ernest (USDA)
Hicks, Ed (HEW)	Weatherholt, Charles (Army)
Hobek, Catherine (NSF)	Wells, Ed (AF)
Hobson, Katherine G. (USDA)	Williams, Nancy (SBA)
Huber, Al (Commerce)	Winslow, Lois (FPC)
Jackson, James, (NCUA)	Workman, Robert (DOD)
Jilek, Joseph (CSC)	Wyvill, Tom (EPA)
Johnstone, David (NFAH)	